

Bulfinch

Air Support Halted on 'Moral' Grounds

Cuban Fiasco Blamed on Plans Change

Concern of some of President Kennedy's closest advisers about the "immorality" of masked aggression led to the failure of the United States-backed invasion of Cuba last year, says Fortune Magazine.

Charles V. Murphy, the magazine's Washington correspondent, writes the idea for the invasion had taken root during the early summer of 1960. The Central Intelligence Agency was given responsibility for planning it.

Then President Eisenhower personally reviewed the plans from time to time, Murphy wrote, and when John Kennedy was elected to succeed him he also was briefed.

Upon taking office, President Kennedy was given this general picture of the proposed invasion by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the writer said:

With a small invasion force, success of the operation would hinge on B26s controlling the air over the beachhead. The planes were to operate from a staging base in Central America, more than 500 miles from Cuba, and would have only 45 minutes for action on target.

In contrast, Castro's air force could be over the beachhead and the invaders' ships in a matter of minutes and for a much longer time. Reducing his air power thus was a necessity, the Joint Chiefs felt.

At a Cabinet meeting April 4, the CIA's Richard M. Bissell—the man given specific responsibility for the plan—gave a final review of the operation, Murphy wrote.

At that time, he added, Sen. William Fulbright, D-Ark., chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, declared the United States should not get involved at all.

Murphy said two other men not present at

the meeting shared Fulbright's feelings: Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles and Adlai Stevenson, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

In deference to their feelings, Murphy wrote, President Kennedy ruled U.E. air power would not be on call at any time and that the B26s flown by "our" Cubans would make only two strikes—two days before the landing and on the morning of the landing.

The attack on D-Day-minus-2 was highly successful, Murphy wrote. Half of Castro's B26s and Sea Furies, and four of his seven or eight T33s, were destroyed or damaged.

Then on April 17, with the invasion fleet already en route Bissell received a call from White House aide McGeorge Bundy, who advised him the President had ordered that there was to be no morning strike of B26s.

Both Bissell and CIA Deputy Director Gen. Charles Cabell urged Rusk, advising with the President, to reconsider but he would not, Murphy wrote.

The writer said Cabell later asked if the invasion force could be pulled back and if the U.S. carrier Boxer, on station about 50 miles from the Bay of Pigs, could be instructed to provide cover.

"Rusk said no . . . The President was awakened and he said no," Murphy continued.

Without the air cover, Murphy wrote, the invasion force had little hope. Castro's forces mopped up quickly, sinking two transports and driving off two others.

President Kennedy and his strategists became alarmed and at about noon on Monday Bissell was told the B26s could attack. A small force was dispatched but fog cut their effectiveness, the writer continued.